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AUTHOR Rogers, George W., Jr.  
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ABSTRACT

The importance of the written psychological report is explored, and, in particular, its relationship to teachers' needs and requirements is discussed. Additionally, the characteristics of a "good" psychological report are listed, and teachers are advised to use these criteria in evaluating the psychological reports they are receiving. (Author)

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## **Teachers and Psychological Reports**

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**George W. Rogers, Jr., Ed.D.**

**Northern Kentucky University**

## Teachers and Psychological Reports

George W. Rogers, Jr., Ed.D.  
Director of Testing and Psychological Services  
Northern Kentucky University

During the past few years, psychologists have become familiar participants in the school setting, and with them have come the usual vehicles for dispensing psychological information—psychological reports. Such written reports should contain unique summations of insightful information which only trained observers and testers could produce. However, referral sources in the schools frequently have experienced great difficulty in retrieving relevant data from such reports which can be put to "good" use.

The written report should be the overt evidence that the psychologist has understood the person he has evaluated, has been able to integrate and focus his thinking, has attended to the referring problem, and is interested in communicating on an understandable level with the person to whom he is writing.<sup>1</sup> Yet, school personnel continue to receive psychological reports which contain a great deal of irrelevant data. Information that helps in understanding a child and his problems is relevant in a report; information that has no foreseeable use is irrelevant and to include it is a waste of time.<sup>2</sup> An isolated I.Q. score with no explanation is not meaningful or useful.

Reports sent to school personnel should be written in understandable phraseology which does not merely confirm the obvious.

Recommendations contained in these reports should assist teachers and others in improving each referred child's learning experiences, and suggestions should emphasize effective methods for developing constructive behavior from a child.

Rogers<sup>3</sup> outlined the characteristics of "good" psychological reports, which will prove both meaningful and useful. They are:

- (1) Understandable, precise statements;
- (2) A paucity of "jargon"—the psychologist who relies heavily on this approach may just have the least to say;
- (3) The obvious should not be excessively confirmed;
- (4) The length of the report should be a matter of flexibility, but a report containing only a few sentences is probably a waste of your time;
- (5) Test scores should be presented with an explanation concerning their interpretation;
- (6) A paucity of information delineating disabilities and diagnosis;
- (7) Little or no vague generalities, i.e., all the reports look alike, only the names have been changed;
- (8) A large dosage of "common sense;"
- (9) Realistic suggestions given which can be "placed-into-practice" and which may have some effectiveness in modifying behavior;

- (10) A good portion of insightful information which will encourage you to view the child from a more positive, understanding perspective;
- (11) Strengths and abilities the child presents should be emphasized and how they might be used to shape appropriate behavior; and finally
- (12) The reports must be timely—a report that lies in a drawer or in a psychologist's head for two months before it is polished-off does not reflect the same data that a more timely description would have.

Apply these criteria to some old and newly received reports, and if they do not measure-up, then you should demand modification or improvement. The psychological report is produced for the purpose of aiding the referred student. If you cannot decipher any usable information from the report of an experience which expended many hours, then the disservice resulting from a lack of communication is ultimately being perpetrated against the student. The psychologist who produces an unusable report degrades his profession, the referral source, and the referred individual. Therefore, the psychologist who writes a report for you needs to meet your criteria, and you should always demand excellence.

# REFERENCES

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3. George W. Rogers, "Maximizing the Practical Contributions of Psychological Reports," The Journal of School Health, in press.